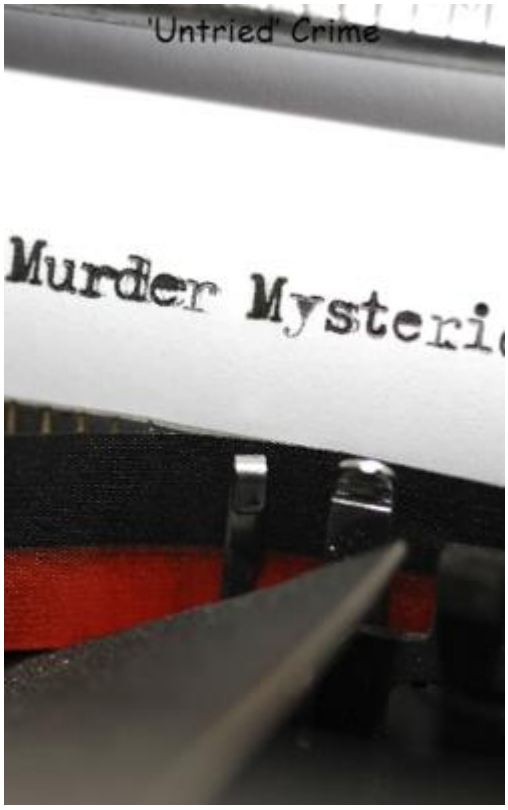

‘Untried’ Crime

By BS Murthy

That day as Dhruva was away with Shakeel and was not expected till late in the night, Radha began scanning Mithya’s closets to delve deeper into her past. Not finding any sleazy stuff therein, as she was about to give up on spying, she located a false bottom in the dressing table that led her to many unusual items. Elated at the discovery as she rummaged the shelf, she found Mithya’s jottings in a leather-bound book, leafing through which, she came across a story-like entry, *Untried Crime,* which read thus:

That was when Mithya’s life was under siege; she faced the unwelcome prospect of divorce, lo, owing to her own infidelity. Barely turned twenty-eight, as she was not for losing the good things of life her well-heeled man afforded her, she began planning a perfect murder of him and her paramour. So, leaving no lose ends for the cops to tie her up to the killings, she made discreet enquiries about the Inspector of the Saifabad Police Station, the one most likely to turn up for questioning her. What with his reputation as an Ace of Crime Detection increasing her sense of challenge, she spied upon him in a *burka,* and finding him manly and handsome, she fell for him. So, she kept track of him, and struck by his élan and enamored of his mien, she even turned covetous, which give an erotic edge to her criminal cunning.

That night, after seeing the end of both her men and having anonymously alerted the police about the double murder, she expectantly waited for Dhruva to turn up at her bungalow, the gates of which she deliberately kept ajar, and when he knocked at the main door, she received him in lingerie.

“Sorry for my rather scanty cladding,” she said alluringly.

“I’m Inspector Dhruva,” he said unable to take his eyes off her hourglass frame.

“I’m Mithya,” she said coquettishly, extending her hand invitingly.

“Mrs. Ashok, I suppose,” he said, grabbing it greedily.

“Yes, I’m Mithya Ashok,” she said leading him into the drawing room.

“Do you know the whereabouts of your husband?” he asked looking into her eyes.

“Why, he’s aboard the Godavari Express,” she said affecting concern.

“Are you sure about that?”

“You know I’m his wife, don’t you?”

“Can’t there be secrets between spouses?”

“Have you come to know of any mistress of his or what?” she said mockingly.

“Maybe he would’ve been better off in her bed, if he had any but….”

“You mean, better off than in mine?” she said interrupting him

“I’ve to get into both to know about that,” he said naughtily, “but sadly he’s no more.”

“In that case, can’t you imagine the possibilities?” she said winking at him.

“It’s no joke, he was possibly murdered,” he said observing her demeanor.

“You mean, in the running train!”

“No, it’s in your A.C Guards’ house.”

“Wonder how he landed there!” she said feigning surprise. “But who could have killed him?”

“Who’s Dilip?”

“Has he killed him?”

“Better answer my question.”

“He’s my errand boy, don’t mind his age,” she said smilingly.

“Is that all?”

“I know privacy is the first victim in crime investigation, don’t I?” she said coquettishly.

“Don’t mistake me, it’s a routine question.”

“Well, to tell you the truth, I am carrying on with him.”

“But I don’t think he’s of your class.”

“Why that should bother you at all?”

“Sorry but surely your man would’ve been concerned about that.”

“You are spot on,” she said taking his hand. “Know that I offered to divorce him.”

“Are you in love with Dilip?”

“Didn’t you hear me say that I am carrying on with him?”

“When did you last see him?”

“I was with him till ten.”

“Where it was?”

“Where Ashok was murdered that is going by your statement.”

“You mean that you three were there.”

“Are you implying a threesome or what?” she said laughingly.

“You know I am not privy to your sexual proclivities,” he said not to be outplayed at his favorite game.

“Given a chance, I won’t withhold any from you,” she said not to be undone.

“You may keep that on hold and...”

“If you put me on hold, I can hang on in hope,” she said turning bold.

“Maybe by the rope,” he said mocking sympathy.

“Don’t worry on that count,” she said nonchalantly.

“Misplaced though, your confidence is admirable,” he said unable to hide his admiration.

“Cerebral though isn’t it a misplaced compliment,” she said coyly adjusting her lingerie.

“Could be but how Ashok was in the wrong place?”

“How am I to know that?”

“Maybe you could guess.”

“I’ve no clue on earth.”

“What if Dilip too is dead.”

“Oh God, did they kill each other?”

“I haven’t said Dilip was dead,” he said and as she was startled a little, he added, “didn’t you give away the clue to the case?”

“Brush up your grammar boy, it was but my question,” she said recovering.

“Then, ‘yes’ is my answer,” he said bowled by her smartness.

“So, I’ve lost my man and my paramour at once.”

“What a double jeopardy it is, I’m really sorry.”

“Why be sorry dear as I’m doubly free,” she said taking his hand.

“I guess you’ve some way to go before that,” he said holding it.

“Going by your demeanor, I don’t think so,” she said squeezing his hand.

“Why not follow me there?”

“Can’t you spare me all that now?”

“So be it but don’t fail to turn up at the mortuary tomorrow.”

“Where it is?”

“Sorry for the slip, it’s at the Gandhi Hospital.”

“Don’t I see you’re enamored,” she said winking at him.

“I will wait for you there by ten in the morning,” he said in embarrassment.

“Thank you for being a considerate cop,” she said taking his hand all again.

“Maybe you could’ve revealed more,” he said enjoying the touch.

“How unfair to say that without giving me scope?” she said feigning to be offended.

“You’re impossible ma’am; good night.”

“Sweet dreams,” she said adjusting her lingerie to part-bare her boob.

While she waved at him amorously, perplexed at her audacity and perturbed by his attraction, he left her half-heartedly.

‘Stabbed in the abdomen, as Ashok lay dead in the sofa, how it was that Dilip’s medulla oblongata had hit the edge of the chair opposite?’ Dhruva began reviewing the murder scene on his way home. ‘Won’t the empty Bagpiper bottle, broken glasses, and the scattered bhujiya *indicate* a drinking brawl, possibly over Mithya that led to their killing each other? But is it as simple as that? Was there Mithya’s hidden hand behind all that? Why not take her finger prints?’

The next day as Mithya reached the mortuary, Dhruva obliged her to leave her finger prints, having which, he was lost in the elegance of her slender fingers that was not lost on her either; so, pleased with herself she turned coquettish and said how she wished that he would let her put them for better use in time. Distracted though by her seductive manner, yet he was able to discern that her demeanor turned cold as she saw Dilip’s body, and that she looked contemptuously at Ashok’s

corpse, which made him think that she had no love lost for either of them. Moreover, when he noticed the steadiness of her hand as she recorded her statement and the coolness in her face as she was all set to take away Ashok's body in the ambulance, he felt that she had the nerve of a killer. If anything, when she told enticingly that she knew he would visit her again in *vardi* but he was welcome even in *mufti,* he was amazed as well as irritated by her audacity. But while getting into her sedan that followed the ambulance as she winked at him invitingly, seeing in her a *femme fatale* of the first order, he waved her off wondering whether she was the murderess after all; and as if to chase his thoughts, leaving the chores of handling Dilip's body to Appa Rao his deputy, he headed straight to the forensic laboratory.

The post-mortem report confirmed the instantaneous deaths of both men and Mithya's fingerprints were found all over the place and that put Dhruva in the contemplative mode.

'Stabbed in the abdomen by Dilip if Ashok died instantaneously, how he could have pushed away Dilip with such a force that his medulla oblongata took the hit?' he began to analyze. 'Even if Ashok had extraordinary reflexes to push away Dilip upon being attacked, the latter's grip on the knife would have ensured that it was pulled out of his frame, which was not the case. So, as Dilip couldn't have died being pushed by Ashok for, he died instantaneously after being stabbed; were it possible that Mithya murdered Dilip in cold blood after abetting him to stab Ashok to death? Was not the informer too an anonymous woman! Was it all Mithya's handiwork then?'

Soon after Ashok's obsequies were over, Dhruva called on Mithya at 9, Castle Hills.

"What brings you here dear?" she greeted him heartily.

"Why can't you guess?"

"Where the need as your urgency shows?" she said winking at him.

"You are mistaken," he said, hiding his embarrassment.

"Oh! I thought you are a game," she said, feigning disappointment.

"You may know that custodial interrogation is a different ball game," he said assuming a grave demeanor.

"Then you have to go to hell to interrogate both of them?" she said smilingly, ushering him into her house.

"Not a bad idea if a *femme fatale* can lead me there."

"If you think I'm one, I would lead you to heaven instead," she said enticingly.

"Tempting though…,"

"What's the hesitation then?" she said moving closer.

"Thanks to your finger prints on the murder weapon, I have to lead you to the lock- up," he said dramatically taking her hand.

"What a discovery!" she said without taking her hand out of his. "Well, it was I who prepared the salad besides mixing drinks for Dilip and me. Wonder how you had missed my finger prints on the Bagpiper bottle and those two glasses."

"Whither gone the third glass?" he said releasing her hand.

"I haven't heard of two drinking out of three glasses, have you?" she said smilingly. "But

Ashok's viscera showed that he too drank."

"Don't you see that scoring for me as it clearly indicates that they quarreled to death after drinking to the dregs," she said triumphantly.

"When Ashok died readily, who could've killed Dilip?" he said with a probing look.

"I know Ashok has quick reflexes, possibly he might've pushed away Dilip before he died," she said with a poker face.

“Why wouldn’t have Dilip pulled out the knife when pushed?”

“It’s puzzling, isn’t it?” she said smilingly.

“What if someone was there to ensure that both died?”

“Eminently possible, but don’t you think it’s too thin a thread to hang me with?” she said mockingly.

“Could the criminal and the informer be the same?”

“We could discuss all that and more if you stay on for dinner,” she said invitingly, taking his hand.

“Not now, maybe some other time,” he said making a move.

“You may know that you’re always welcome,” she said pressing his hand.

“Looks like you’re a tough nut to crack,” he said pressing her hand.

“Oh!’ she feigned pain.

“I’m sorry,” he said releasing her hand.

“Why, isn’t it precious to hold?” she said extending her hand enticingly.

“That’s what is disturbing,” he said waving her goodbye.

“That’s the charm of life,” she said, blowing a kiss at him.

Bowled though by her charms, as her daredevilry affronted his professional ego, hell- bent on pinning her down, he reviewed the case for possible loopholes, and finding none, he thought that he should play ball with her in her own court.

That evening when Dhruva reached 9, Castle Hills in *mufti,* Mithya in light pink voile sari, was in the lawns with Dicey, her new acquisition, and having greeted him heartily, she warmly led him into the drawing room to flirt with him openly. Soon, as they had a binge of booze sitting together in that wide sofa, finding her at her evocative best, he realized how vulnerable he was to her peculiar persona. But as he remained tentative, teasing him at his unease, before cozying up to him by drawing closer to him, she revealed her riveting allures by degrees, and unable to resist her charms, as he conceded his erotic ground to her, she induced him to lay the foundations for an amorous edifice through necking and petting.

When she proposed dinner to let them satiate their palates as a prelude to satiating their libidos, following her to the dining table, as he took to bottom pinching, she said coyly that she wouldn’t be granting him an out-of-turn favor. Saying that he would wait for its turn, yet as he busied himself at her bottom, she said that he could have his way both ways but as per protocol. After a hearty meal followed by pan, she led her into the lawn to let him puff away at his *cigar,* as she enjoyed its aroma, and as he stubbed the butt, hugging him ardently and reaching for his lips, she kissed him fervently, inducing in him the urge to surge in. Thereby, leading him indoors, she stripped him in the drawing room and pulled him into the bedroom only to push him onto her sprawling mahogany bed for their erotic exertions.

At length, lying in his arms in satisfaction, she opened her secretive mind to him.

“I know what brought you into my bed, and as quid pro quo, I’ll satisfy your curiosity,” she said coyly. “It was Dilip’s idea to eliminate Ashok and I went along with it, not to acquire a rich widow tag, but to avoid the divorcee card. With inputs from Dilip, I worked out a plan to slow-poison Ashok, as and when he embarked on a journey by train and as I was all set, it dawned on me that in all suspicious deaths, the spouse would readily come under the scanner, so I realized that to save my skin, I should get rid of Dilip as well. Moreover, eager to step into Ashok’s shoes, Dilip was getting too big for his boots, and to give a spin to Ashok’s death, before arranging that fateful meeting to untangle the love triangle, I booked a berth for him on the Godavari Express. The rest as you know is mystery.”

“Isn’t it a loss to the crime history?” he said fondling her.

“Why not we together create history,” she said invitingly. “It’s my curiosity to measure up the cop who would turn up for my questioning that made me appraise you on the sly; even as your looks surged my sexual passion, your manner induced a sense of belonging in me. Believe me; my urge to make a new beginning with you fueled my desire to be freed of both of them even more; that way, my man, you are an abettor of the crime. Whatever, in the wake of the murders, breathing down my neck, you’ve charmed me with your mind as well, and now with your lovemaking, you’ve increased my craving for being your wife. You know, all this is for your ears only and not for my trial for sure; try acting funny and you stand accused - of torture and rape - haven’t you left enough evidence behind – on both counts.”

“What to make of you?” he said in exasperated admiration.

“Yours if you please,” she winked at him.

“What if I let you loose,” he said contemplatively.

“Why not enslave me.”

“That’s resisting the irresistible.”

“If you can ignore my past, I won’t let you regret making me your wife, it’s my promise,” she said pleadingly taking him in her embrace.

“I know your value to my life but let me think it over,” he said disarmingly.

“Won’t you come tomorrow?” she said reaching for his lips.

“You haven’t left me as yet,” he said.

When he reached for his dress after she released him, she pulled out the tape recorder from his pocket.

“Let this be my keepsake of our first-time,” she said dangling it before him.

“Oh, you are impossible!” he said taking her into his arms.

However, after the dust has settled down, he led me into our marvelous wedlock. Amazed at that she read, Radha thought that Mithya could have been a temptress in the Cleopatra mold and wondered what would have happened had she poisoned her men.

Excerpt of the eponymous chapter of the author’s Googleable free ebook, Prey on the Prowl – A Crime Novel